

## East Jemez Resources Council Meeting

### *Meeting Minutes – December 11, 2003*

#### **Welcome and Introductions – John Mack**

John Mack opened the meeting with a round-table introduction of those attending. There was a brief review of the agenda and a request for topics to add, subtract, or reorder.

#### **EJRC Chair for 2004 – John Mack**

John announced that Todd had contacted the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) and Bob Parmenter, VCNP Chief Scientist, graciously volunteered to chair the EJRC in 2004. Todd said Bob Parmenter was encouraged by the invitation. John nominated Bob for the position. John also mentioned that the VCNP had meetings all day in Santa Fe and they were sorry they could not be represented. Todd suggested this was an opportunity for the VCNP to network and possibly increase its role in the region. Neil Weber seconded the nomination. Todd agreed to notify Bob of the good news.

#### **EJRC Charter Revisions and Ratifications - All (handout)**

John initiated the conversation by stating this had been a high priority for him as chair. With recent changes in management at various agencies over the past 1.5 years (e.g., BNM, USFS, San Ildefonso, VCNP), Todd and John agreed this coming year would be a good time to update agency signatures. To get signatures, Todd and John offered to meet with heads or councils of the various regional land management entities that are eligible to sign the Charter as an EJRC Member. Signatures from participating entities are not required. The Council then reviewed the most recent revision of the charter, which includes a map indicating the domain of the EJRC. Neil Weber requested the addition of the new boundary for San Ildefonso and Todd asked Neil if he would provide the necessary boundary changes before the next meeting.

Todd asked for the title that should be used on the Charter signature line for the VCNP. John stated it would likely be the Executive Director, Gary Ziehe, but the Council could call Bob Parmenter and ask what level of signature the VCNP would want. Todd also stated that he is still working on University of New Mexico's signature via Terry Yates, Vice-Provost for Research. John then commented that the terms of the Charter had changed from earlier language and asked if there were any comments on it. Dave Bradbury suggested changing the language under Article II, Sec. 4, and it was eventually agreed by those present that this section would read "Membership and participation is voluntary." The ordering/rotation of agencies was briefly discussed, as was the need to develop separate agreements to administer or exchange funds (Article II, Sec. 11). It was agreed that Article II, Sec. 5, would be changed to read, "Council leadership responsibilities rotate among signatories at the first meeting of each calendar year during February." Todd was complemented on the simplicity and directness of the document.

#### **Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership Update - Maryann McGraw**

Due to the unexpected absence of Maryann McGraw, no update was provided.

### **Cultural Resources Working Group Update - Rory Gauthier**

Rory said the working group met on September 4<sup>th</sup>. At the meeting, Mike Bremer from the US Forest Service was elected to be the new Chair of the Cultural Resources Working Group. The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for January 29<sup>th</sup> at Bandelier National Monument.

In other news, Bandelier National Monument has completed 1,000 acres of survey, pursued erosion control measures south of Puye Canyon to Guaje Canyon, and participated in the development and review of DOE/NNSA environmental assessments for the following DOE/NNSA projects: The Sanitary Solid Waste Landfill, The Trails Management Program, and The Distribution Center. John commented that the County had stopped pursuing options for the Distribution Center because DOE/NNSA would have to pursue an environmental impact statement for the action as a result of issues associated with the proposed location of the action. Todd commented that he understood the Landfill environmental assessment was on hold, in part, due to new personnel at Los Alamos County and a need to “re-think” the proposal. Rory continued the update by stating the Working Group had discussed the Laboratory excavation sites at the airport and Rendilla Canyon as well as the Santa Clara land acquisition from Bandelier National Monument.

According to Rory, Steve Chomko of the VCNP has secured funding for the construction of a cultural resources research facility. Though Steve wants the involvement of others, Rory said it is unclear at this point what Bandelier National Monument’s involvement will be. In addition, the VCNP wants a little more money to increase the size of the facility. John proposed the VCNP provide thoughts about the curatorial facility at the February meeting of the EJRC. He concluded his update by stating the Working Group would have further discussion about the curatorial facility at their January meeting.

### **EJRC Web Site Update – Todd Haagenstad**

Todd informed the Council that EJRC website development initiative has been on hold. He reminded the group they could go to the Laboratory’s Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship homepage (<http://em.lanl.gov/envworkgroups.htm>) to access the EJRC meeting minutes, charter, and agenda. He spoke to the website engineer about using the site as a gate for other entities by providing an electronic version of the agency’s emblem or a text link. John reminded the Council the site was also meant for information dissemination (e.g., white papers). There was further discussion about obtaining electronic versions of emblems from various participants and possible restrictions. Todd provided his email address (hth@lanl.gov) for further correspondence.

### **LANL Trails Management Update - Dan Pava**

Dan Pava began by introducing himself as a member of the Heritage Resources and Environmental Planning team in the Laboratory’s RRES-ECO (Ecology Group). His primary job is to serve as coordinator for DOE/NNSA environmental assessments. He is currently working on the trails management program. He emphasized that the Laboratory is using a programmatic approach to assessing and managing trails on the site. A recent environmental assessment, finding of no significant impact and Mitigation Action Plan will be used to move forward to proactively manage trails on Laboratory property. The pueblos and Bandelier

National Monument will also be involved. Dan then displayed a series of photos that reflect the confusion surrounding public use of Laboratory trails. The DOE/NNSA has many missions, but public recreation has not been one of them despite the numerous trails available. Dan discussed how poor signage may result in safety and security issues associated with public access, as well as threats to cultural and natural resources.

The environmental assessment for trails management is being implemented through the “Trail Access Working Group (TAWG).” The TAWG is comprised of Laboratory subject matter experts and partners and agencies on the Pajarito Plateau. The objective of this working group is to make recommendations on policy as a body to senior Laboratory managers. After displaying a map of the trail systems, Dan commented they could make it available for official use only. The working group is aware of interconnecting/multi-jurisdictional trails, but will not make policy for those trails – only recommendations for management by other agencies. Some trails may be closed over time if issues indicate the need while other trails may be improved or maintained for use.

Dan concluded by stating the next meeting of the working group is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28th, at TA-21. Future agenda items include an initial scoping of trail issues as well as a survey of Laboratory personnel to find out which trails are used. Los Alamos County may also survey local trail users via utility bills. Dan suggested the next stage in the planning process was to develop implementation plans to present to the Laboratory managers. The Mitigation Action Plan requires the Laboratory to report each year on their progress. LANL is also getting a legal opinion so as to involve volunteers in the trail management program. For further information, contact Dan Pava at [dpava@lanl.gov](mailto:dpava@lanl.gov) or 667-7360.

#### **White Paper Presentation; Beetle Mortality - Todd Haagenstad (Handout)**

In the absence of Sam Loftin, Todd presented an updated white paper on beetle mortality in the region. The handout primarily contains maps with the best information available on a large scale, resources on the current outlook, and informational internet links. The Council reviewed the figures, which primarily indicated mortality continuing to climb in the piñon/juniper woodlands and leveling off in ponderosa pine. Numbers indicate 20-80% mortality within the 770,800 acres identified. The general consensus is that for a change of this scale there is not much we can do to manage it. Figures indicate some optimism over the next few months, but unsure what effect it will have. John commented that over most of the west, it is predicted that the drought will continue or intensify. Todd said for further information people could contact Sam Loftin at [sloftin@lanl.gov](mailto:sloftin@lanl.gov) or 665-8011.

#### **Planning Update Roundtable Discussion - All**

*Bandelier National Monument (John Mack)* – John began by reporting on the Bandelier Closed Area environmental assessment. The central issue is to open the closed area in the Upper Cerro. A lot of changes occurred after 2000 when the VCNP originated. He distributed a handout that provided background about acreage, what is currently closed, and private inholdings. Some preliminary input by the pueblos was provided at the November 4<sup>th</sup> Tribal Inter-council, but Bandelier National Monument is still receiving input. The intention is to develop an environmental assessment in early 2004, have at least one public meeting, and meet with the VCNP and US Forest Service. Maps within the handout showed the progression of planned

purchases and what is currently closed. John concluded by stating that the bottom line is for people to keep their ears tuned as the environmental assessment is developed. He also briefly mentioned that Bandelier National Monument is continuing to work on the Ecological Restoration and Fire Management Plan environmental impact statements.

Los Alamos National Laboratory; Ecology Group(Todd Haagenstad) – Todd updated the group on the Laboratory's Environmental Management System (EMS), White Rock Canyon Reserve, and the Wildland Fire Management Plan:

- Laboratory EMS - Todd stated the EMS is essentially a reflection of the DOE Order for environmental protection (DOE O 450.1), which has added a requirement to protect cultural and natural resources. The crosswalk between the EMS and the DOE/NNSA Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) will mainly be an internal process linked to the operational safety envelope and procedures to find gaps and areas for additional work.
- White Rock Canyon Reserve (Reserve) – Todd gave a brief review of the history of the reserve. The Laboratory became involved via DOE Proclamation in October 1999 when 1,000 acres was set-aside in the southeastern corner of the Laboratory as an ecological reserve. The Laboratory is currently working in conjunction with Bandelier National Monument to prepare for the development of a resource management plan for the Reserve. A Memorandum of Agreement between DOE/NNSA and Department of Interior (Bandelier National Monument) states that DOE/NNSA will continue to own the Reserve land, and will co-manage the Reserve resources under a resource management plan due in June 2005. Todd is working with John on a conceptual model for developing the resource management plan as part of his graduate degree. The Reserve resource management plan will be developed through a formal planning process with other land management entities in the region (e.g., US Forest Service, the Native American pueblos, Los Alamos County, and others).
- Wildland Fire Management Plan – In response to the large regional wildfires over the past decade, about a year ago the President of the United States and Secretary of Energy developed and issued a National Wildland Fire Management Policy and DOE Wildland Fire Management Policy respectively, to address the need for developing and implementing initiatives to minimize the risk of wildland fires on Federal (i.e., DOE) lands. The DOE Policy was written by a Federal interagency group and requires DOE sites to develop a management plan to identify and manage the risks of wildland fires. In response, the Laboratory has begun preparing the Wildland Fire Management Plan that addresses planning and assessment, mitigation, and actual management in the case of a fire. Todd stated a draft plan is currently being reviewed and is scheduled to be completed in September 2004.

USFS/Española Ranger District (Mary Orr) – Mary stated the Espanola district will begin an environmental assessment for the roads analysis process. They will address closure, partial closure, and decommissioning of roads. The public involvement process will occur in the next few months. She also stated there are a number of open houses coming up. John asked if any of the proposed action was associated with the Seeking Common Ground initiatives, and Mary replied that it was not. Mary also stated that Mary Rodriguez of Fuels Management had

accepted a job with the VCNP. Lawrence Garcia from the Gila National Forest will be the new Fuels Management Officer for the Española District.

LANL RRES-ECO (Susan Rupp) –

Susan updated the group on recent issues concerning elk collaring efforts at the laboratory. She stated that recent changes in Laboratory management had resulted in the Ecology Group having to cut back significantly on their elk research/management program. In addition, several global positioning system (GPS) elk collars that were scheduled to release this summer failed to release. Data on the collared animal locations are stored on-board these collars making the need to retrieve them essential. As a result, numerous regional agencies are currently collaborating in an effort to decide the best avenue for retrieving these collars. Susan stated that attempts had already been made to contact hunters in the region and remind them there is no penalty for harvesting collared animals. Another option currently being pursued is to submit a proposal through New Mexico Department of Game and Fish requesting emergency Sikes Act funds to pay for a selective recapture effort. Susan commented how much she has appreciated the efforts of various agencies (e.g., NMGF, VCNP, BNM, etc.) for their assistance with these efforts. Representatives from Santa Clara Pueblo stated they were also having the same problem and requested to be involved in the collar retrieval effort.

**Future Agenda Items and Closing Remarks – All**

Those attending concluded the meeting with many well wishes for a safe and happy holiday season. Todd led the Council in an expression of gratitude to John Mack for serving as EJRC Chair during 2003. Todd welcomed suggestions for future agenda items to which Mary Orr replied it would be nice to have an update from the County on fuels reduction and use of monies. In addition, Rory provided a web address ([www.lac-nm.us](http://www.lac-nm.us)) that outlines land ownership changes. The meeting was adjourned.